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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 002626

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/PMBS, EAP/PD, INR/EAP, INR/B

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [PINR](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: PALACE ASSERTS THAT OPPOSITION IS TRYING TO USE
"TAPES" AS PART OF DESTABILIZATION PLOT

REF: A. MANILA 2578

[TB](#). MANILA 2359

[TC](#). MANILA - EAP/PMBS 05/11/05 CLASS E-MAIL

[TD](#). MANILA 2103

[TE](#). MANILA 1998

Classified By: Political Officer Andrew McClearn for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[T1](#). (C) Summary: Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye publicly stated June 5 that Malacanang was worried that the opposition was trying to use an alleged tape of presidential conversations as part of a destabilization plot. Bunye also stated that the opposition claimed that the tape had come from the U.S. Embassy. Mission dismissed the allegations, and underscored the USG's strong support for Philippine democracy and stability, as well as our opposition to any extra-constitutional activities. Malacanang, which has been taking a pounding recently regarding "jueteng" and falling poll numbers, clearly believes that pre-emptively getting this story in the press would undermine the opposition's efforts to use the alleged tape to discredit the Administration. End Summary.

Malacanang goes to the Press

[T2](#). (U) Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye publicly stated June 5 that Malacanang was worried that the opposition was trying to use an alleged tape of presidential conversations as part of a destabilization plot. Bunye also stated that the opposition claimed that the tape had come from the U.S. Embassy. Leading newspapers all carried front-page articles citing Bunye as decrying an "opposition plot to destabilize" the GRP through the use of the alleged tape and quoted him stating that "the plotters are claiming the tape came from sources in the USG." Bunye also said in a June 5 radio discussion that he expected opposition politicians to release the contents of the tape in the near future. Bunye said the alleged taped conversations purportedly involved the President discussing "election fraud" with one of the Commissioners of the GRP's Commission on Elections (COMELEC) in May-June 2004. He insisted the tape was a fabrication.

[T3](#). (C) Queried by press sources, Mission denied any involvement in the matter. Mission also underscored our strong support for Philippine democracy and stability, as well as our opposition to any extra-constitutional activities. (Note: Emboffs received an alleged transcript of the tape several weeks ago from opposition contacts, although not the purported tape itself. Mission translation of the alleged transcript appears to show discussions of electoral manipulation, but contains no "smoking gun" as to purported Malacanang involvement -- see ref C. Late June 6, a contact informed Emboff that opposition elements are planning to hold a press conference attacking GMA that will make references to the alleged tape. End note.)

Malacanang Approaches Mission

[T4](#). (C) Separately, Bunye met with Public Affairs Counselor June 4 to discuss reports that the USG had provided the opposition with the alleged tape. PA Counselor dismissed this claim. Bunye also asked whether the USG was angry with the GRP for trying to improve relations with China. PA Counselor replied that this claim was wholly unfounded. In a June 6 press event regarding the 2005 Trafficking in Persons report, reporters asked PA Counselor about the reports. PA Counselor again dismissed the notion the USG was involved in any way. Philippine Ambassador to the U.S. Albert Del Rosario, who is in Manila, also requested clarification from the Charge on June 4 about allegations that a USG official had provided the tape to the opposition. Charge denied the claim and reiterated US support for democracy and stability in the Philippines. National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Director Reynaldo Wycoco also brought up the allegations in a June 5 meeting with Legatt. Legatt also dismissed the claims.

Comment

15. (C) Malacanang, which has been taking a pounding recently regarding jueteng and falling poll numbers (reftels), must believe that this pre-emptive strike would undermine any effort by the opposition to use the alleged tape as a way to discredit the Administration. We are not sure of the precise origin tape itself, much less of the wild charge that the USG was somehow involved in this matter. Politicians of all stripes in the Philippines often try to show that they have the blessing of the U.S., while the other side does not. The reluctance of the opposition to release the tape earlier may indicate a realization that its contents were less damaging than rumors could be. Mission will continue to urge all sides to focus on constructive activities that do not breed further cynicism toward politics and politicians.

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